

THERAPEUTICS OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.

GALVANISM IN THE TREATMENT OF INSANITY.—In the *Journal of Mental Science*, Dr. Joseph Wigglesworth has an article on the use of galvanism in certain forms of insanity. These are his conclusions :

1. That while the use of galvanism to the head is a proceeding which is certainly *not* going to revolutionize the treatment of insanity, this agent is, nevertheless, one that is capable of doing much good in certain selected cases, and that by its judicious employment we may every now and then cure cases which would drift into hopeless chronicity.

2. The class of cases which offer the best field for the employment of this agent is that which includes examples of mental stupor and torpor—cases which are grouped under the specific designations of melancholia attonita and so-called acute dementia.

L. F. B.

TASTELESS PREPARATIONS OF CASCARA SAGRADA (RHAMNUS PURSHIANA.)—Recent investigation of the constituents of *Cascara sagrada* has led to the discovery of new principles and facts of great importance pharmaceutically and therapeutically.

The chief objection to *Cascara sagrada* heretofore has been its inherent bitterness. In the light of recent researches, tasteless preparations of this drug highly efficacious medicinally are now to be had.

These discoveries mark a distinct advance in pharmaceutical attainment and in the therapeutics of chronic constipation, since this remedy can now be much more generally and persistently administered, and its well-known tonic laxative action obtained without the drawbacks which seemed formerly inseparable from its employment.

The facts disclosed concerning this remedy deserve more than a passing notice, especially since they indicate the existence of principles and modes of action extending far beyond the subject indicated, and are well worth the close attention of the thoughtful and scientific physician. A valuable contribution to the knowledge of the chemical con-

stitution of this drug appeared in the *American Journal of Pharmacy*, for February, 1888, which makes it possible not only to obtain a true interpretation of the various clinical observations, but clears up apparent anomalies and also indicates the reasons for observed effects, which have lately been disputed, but now admit of no further question or misunderstanding.

Among the discoveries referred to in this valuable paper, of especial interest to the physician, is the influence of a class of vegetable ferments and their recognition as the causes of various abnormal conditions, such as colic, vomiting, nausea, diarrhœa and dysentery, which occasionally attend the administration of certain drugs.

It appears that Frangula bark when fresh, contains such a ferment in excessive quantities and is, therefore, unfit for use until the ferment has exhausted itself—the process usually occupying several years. It also appears that Cascara contains some of this principle and this fact will account for the occasional untoward effects of the drug, which have been observed as consequent on the employment of a number of its preparations heretofore in the market. These facts are, therefore, not due, as has been supposed, to any idiosyncrasy on the part of the patient, or to the laxative or tonic constituents of the bark itself, but to a distinct objectionable principle, which once recognized can be rendered inoperative and harmless.—*Am. Journal Pharmacy, Feb., 1888.*

PSEUDO-ANGINA PECTORIS.—Prof. Roberts Bartholow lectured upon this subject recently at the Jefferson Medical College Hospital, Philadelphia. The patient, not yet thirty, of well-marked neurotic constitution, without history of rheumatism, syphilis, or diphtheria, presented but one abnormal condition—paroxysms of sudden pain in or about the præcordial region, shooting in all directions over the chest, especially into the left neck and shoulder, sometimes downward into the left arm. Respiration is gasping and shallow, cyanosis, an agonized expression, some protrusion of the eyes, and a cold, clammy sweat quickly appear.